



Globalizing Justice: The Contribution of Christian Spirituality

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Abstract

This article looks at the role of Christian spirituality in fostering right relationships. It looks first at the integral relationship between spirituality and justice, particularly as it takes shape within the terrain of the human heart. Secondly, it examines the role of social context in a transformative spirituality by looking at one faith community of undocumented immigrants in the United States. And thirdly it looks at migration as a metaphor for a spirituality of transformation, one that orients a pilgrim people towards a homeward journey and awakens in us a social conscience. The central argument is that spiritual transformation is about the movement towards authenticity, where the gift of peace grows from the rebuilding of our relationships with God, ourselves and others.

The fundamental mission of the church in every time period is to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world and the one through whom people find the fullness of life. How it comprehends, articulates and implements this mission is something that must be discovered anew in every generation.¹ Even as scripture attests that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8), the church's self-understanding is forever evolving as it grows in its awareness of the mystery of the triune God, the response to gratuitous love and the promise of human redemption. Shaped also by the needs, challenges and insights of its particular social context, the church must continually reflect on its mission amidst the signs of the times, the truth claims of other religions and the deepest longings of the human heart.

¹ Pelikan, Jaroslav (1999) *Jesus Through the Ages: His Place in the History of Culture*, pp.1–8. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

The more the church participates in the mission of God, however, the more it becomes painfully aware of the distance between who it is and who it is called to be. Burdened by sin, it clings in hope to Christ's promises of reconciliation and renewal. As it waits for a new creation, the church walks in the world as a pilgrim people, seeking to transform not only others through a life of teaching, preaching and service but also to undergo a continual process of conversion that leads to its own transformation. Unable to accomplish this task by its own efforts, it continually looks to the regenerative power of the divine Spirit in order to become more authentically human and more worthy ambassadors of the living God in every land.

The gospel holds out a powerful message of transformation for the modern world, but something is missing in our lives and in our churches. In many parts of the world, church participation is minimal. Often it has become more of a routine and an obligation than a way to live in the world in a new way. Some are baptized, catechized and sacramentalized, but often formalized and wooden in their approach to prayer and worship. Still others are evangelized and energized, but poorly socialized, resulting in a lack of social concern, intellectual openness, psychological integration, or even the ability to dialogue with persons who hold a perspective different than their own.

Many people today, particularly the young, are searching for something more. A hunger for justice amidst the disorders of the world, a thirst for meaning in a culture marked by an empty consumerism and a desire for connection amidst broken relationships are some of the symptoms that manifest the need for transformation on social, economic, political, affective, moral and religious levels. People today often recognize a transcendent dimension to their searching, but they often wonder to what extent mainline churches offer reasoned and convincing answers to the compelling questions brought forth by the complex reality of their lives. Some may not be open to the liberating message of the gospel, while others might be except they do not see – or have not found – the correlation between the deeper longings of their hearts and the structures of organized religion. Very often such people describe themselves as “spiritual” but not “religious,” leaving us with many questions about the role of the church in fostering a spirituality that changes people's lives. It is not my intention in this essay to examine the adequacy of the religious/spiritual divide that is becoming increasingly common, nor is it to locate the problem within people, programmes or structures, but rather to ask how this situation might prompt churches to reflect more on the role of a transformative spirituality within the context of their mission.

Here I will examine three themes related to Christian spirituality and human transformation. First I would like to look at the integral relationship between spirituality and

justice, particularly as it takes shape within the terrain of the human heart. Secondly, I will examine the role of social context in a transformative spirituality by looking at one faith community of undocumented immigrants in the United States.² And thirdly I will look at migration as a metaphor for a spirituality of transformation, one that orients a pilgrim people towards a homeward journey and awakens in us a social conscience. My argument is that spiritual transformation is about homecoming, which is the movement towards authenticity, where a life of peace grows from the rebuilding of our relationships with God, ourselves and others.

Spirituality and Justice: The Terrain of the Human Heart

Although the church's mission needs to be organized and institutionalized, the path to a transformative spirituality begins in the human heart. Without attentiveness to the inner dimensions of human life, the lived experience of religion is cold and lifeless. In recent decades there has been a resurgence of interest in spirituality in various forms. Part of this interest can be attributed to the fact that globalization and technological developments may have given us more and more control over the external world, but they have offered little assistance in understanding the inner world of the human person and the ultimate questions of human existence. These questions deal with loneliness and belonging, good and evil, peace and division, healing and suffering, meaning and meaninglessness, hope and despair, love and apathy, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery and ultimately, life and death.³ Such issues can only be worked out in the inner depths of the human heart, where we forge the metal of what we most value. These values are the concern of spirituality and they are central catalysts in the process of human transformation.

Spirituality is defined in many different ways and here I describe it primarily in terms of how people live out what they most value.⁴ Christian spirituality, more specifically, involves living out what Jesus most valued. In other words Christian spirituality is about following Jesus through the power of the divine breath, living out the values of the

² For a more in-depth treatment of mission in social context see: Bevans, Stephen B. and Schroeder, Roger P. (2004) *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, Orbis, Maryknoll, NY; and Guder, Darrell L. (ed.) (1998) *Missional church: A Vision for the Sending of the church in North America*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

³ For more on the issue of justice within the Christian tradition, see: Groody, Daniel G. (2007) *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*. Orbis, Maryknoll, NY.

⁴ In a related way, Sandra Schneiders defines spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives." See: Schneiders, Sandra M. (1998) The Study of Christian Spirituality: The Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline. *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, 1/1, pp. 3–2; and (2003) Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum. *Spiritus*, 3, pp.163–85.

kingdom of God and generating a community transformed by the love of God and others. It makes present a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace.⁵ Lived out in its personal and public dimensions, Christian spirituality is the way in which the invisible heart of God is made visible to the world by revealing the life of Christ in the lives of his followers.⁶

From a Christian perspective, spirituality is integrally related to the deeper needs and concerns of the human heart. The human heart has always been understood not only biologically as the source of blood flow but metaphorically as the source from which flows the greatest values and aspirations of human life. Involving the whole process of human understanding, grasped from the depths of our being, the heart is the place where the human and the divine intersect. It deals with the wealth we possess inside ourselves, the quality of our character and the endowment of our souls.

In the scriptures, the heart is more than the sentimental and emotional centre of a person; it is the symbol of one's whole being.⁷ It includes reason as well as emotion, integrating them and informing all aspects of the human person. The heart is the place of deepest searching and the place where we discover our most authentic desires, find our ultimate identity and perceive accurately the deepest realities. It reveals how we spend our time (Luke 10:38–42), where we store our treasure (Matt. 6:19–21) and how we live out our relationships (Rom. 12:18). The challenge of Christian spirituality, lived as following Jesus, resides in making the mind and heart of Christ one's own and, in the process, becoming more human, more truly oneself and more interconnected to all of creation.

Although the heart expresses the deepest longings of the human person, it is also a place of conflict. These conflicts often are exacerbated by the dehumanizing undercurrents of contemporary society.⁸ The Catholic Church's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, names well the integral connection between the disorders of the modern world and the inner strife of the human person:

⁵ Flannery, Austin (ed.) (1975) *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, vol. 1, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 36, p.375. Costello, Northport, NY.

⁶ Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, p.254.

⁷ de Fraine, Jean and Vanhoye, Albert (1967) Heart. In: Xavier Leon-Defour (ed.) *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, pp.200–202. Desclée Company, Paris.

⁸ In a global community where such a high premium is put on material acquisition and financial metrics, we might ask why it is, as some studies indicate, that human happiness peaked for Americans in 1957. See: Smith, Tom W. (1979) Happiness: Time Trends, Seasonal Variations, Intersurvey Differences, and Other Mysteries. *Social Psychological Quarterly*, 42/1, p. 24. For a fuller treatment of material prosperity and human happiness, see in particular Scitovsky, Tibor (1992) *The Joyless Economy: The Psychology of Human Satisfaction*, Oxford University, New York.

The truth is that the imbalances under which the modern world labors are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man . . . [where] many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand as a creature he experiences his limitations in a multitude of ways; on the other he feels himself to be boundless in his desires and summoned to a higher life. Pulled by manifold attractions he is constantly forced to choose among them and renounce some. Indeed, as a weak and sinful being, he often does what he would not, and fails to do what he would. Hence he suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society.⁹

The human heart, as a locus of human transformation, finds itself in a struggle between its deepest longings and its strongest conflicts. Made by love, for love and to love, it is drawn into relationships, but these same relationships can be a source of tension, if not conflict, some coming from within, some originating from others and some by other forces in society at large. The goal of a transformative spirituality is directed towards the pursuit of peace, but its realization is not oriented towards personal fulfillment in the narrow sense but in the establishment of justice.

In contrast to contemporary connotations, God's justice is not principally about vengeance or retribution but about restoring people to right relationships. Christian theology speaks primarily about two notions of justice: internal justice and external justice.¹⁰ Internal justice involves the experience of justification or being put in right relationship with God through the saving work of Jesus Christ. External justice deals with the promotion of good works. Internal justice refers to God's activity within a person and external justice to one's response to God's grace. Internal justice relates to the first and the greatest command to love the Lord God with all one's heart, soul and mind (Matt. 22:36–38) and external justice to the second command which is like the first, to love one's neighbour as oneself (Matt. 22:39). It seeks humanizing activity leading to right relationships with one's self, the community, its social structures and finally to the environment.¹¹

The Old Testament has a rich and nuanced meaning of the term "justice."¹² The scriptures speak about justice in many different ways, but two of the principal uses in the Old Testament are variations of the word *sedaqah* (used 523 times) and *mishpat* (used 422 times). Whereas *mishpat* refers to "justice or judgment," *sedaqah* goes beyond legal para-

⁹ Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 10, p.910.

¹⁰ For more on the topic of spirituality and justice within our contemporary context, see Groody, Daniel G. (2007) *Globalization, Spirituality and Justice: Navigating a Path to Peace*, Orbis, Maryknoll, NY.

¹¹ This definition is drawn in part from an excellent article by Crosby, Michael (1993) Justice. In: Michael Downey (ed.) *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, p.597. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN.

¹² Donahue, John R. (2005) The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching. In: Kenneth R. Himes (ed.) *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, pp.9–40. Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C.

meters and is often translated as “righteousness”. *Sedqah* encompasses many aspects of life, including the distribution of material necessities and has significance for all relationships.¹³ It is not about self-righteousness, however, but about social righteousness, particularly as it is expressed in a relational interdependence and a profound attentiveness to the needs of others.¹⁴ No peace is possible without justice and no justice is possible without right relationships.¹⁵ Justice is about fidelity to the demands of relationships. It deals with how individuals, families, communities, as well as juridical, religious and political authorities interact with each other, with the most vulnerable members of society and with the Covenant God.¹⁶ At the same time, the biblical notion of sin also gives a way of understanding the human potential for evil, which fractures relationships, disrupts the harmony of creation and results in social disorder and injustice (James 1:13–15).

A central focus of the New Testament is to reveal Jesus Christ as the justice of God who brings people into right relationships.¹⁷ The mission of God in Jesus is a mission of reconciliation and the church is called by the risen Lord to participate in this mission. This mission impels the church to move outwards not only to the ends of the earth but also to the edges of society in order to help create those new relationships. In imitation of Christ, it seeks to invite all people to God’s table, especially those who experience exclusion in their current lot and find themselves alienated from the social, economic and even religious life of people in society.

The mission of Jesus first took shape in Galilee. As Virgil Elizondo observes, Galilee is not only significant geographically but also missiologically.¹⁸ In his itinerant ministry, Jesus went out to where people lived and in doing so he redefined the centre and the periphery. From the edges of society he inaugurates a new reign of justice and reveals that authentic power comes not from social status, economic might or political clout, but by creating relationships, beginning with those who are ignored, neglected or rejected in

¹³ von Rad, Gerhard (1962) (trans. D.M.G. Stalker) *Old Testament Theology*, p.370. Harper and Bros., New York.

¹⁴ Donahue, The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching. In: *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, p.14.

¹⁵ For more on the theme of justice as right relationship, see Mays, J.L. (1987) Justice Perspectives from the Prophetic Tradition. In: David L. Peterson (ed.) *Prophecy in Israel: Search for an Identity*, pp.144–158. Fortress Press, Philadelphia; and Donahue, John R. (1977) Biblical Perspectives on Justice. In: John C. Haughey (ed.) *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, pp.68–112. Paulist, New York.

¹⁶ See (1961) Righteousness in the OT. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, p.80. Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN.

¹⁷ Burghardt, Walter (2002) Worship and Justice Reunited. In: Anne Y. Koester (ed.) *Liturgy and Justice: To Worship God in Spirit and Truth*, p.37. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN.

¹⁸ Elizondo, Virgilio (2009) Jesus the Galilean Jew in Mestizo Theology. *Theological Studies*, 70, June 2009, pp. 262–280.

society. By word and action he reveals that the process of reordering our inner and outer world is also integrally related to how we respond to the most vulnerable members of the human family. Galilee holds a hermeneutical key to a transformative spirituality in that it is not only from the margins that Jesus preached the good news, but also it is from there that the church can be made into something new. One place where such a mission of transformative spirituality is taking shape on the edges of society and to which we turn as an example, is within a faith community of undocumented migrants in Coachella, California.

Spirituality and Context: The Terrain of the Undocumented Immigrant in the United States

Churches in the United States are devoting increased energy to their outreach towards the Latino population. In many dioceses Latinos already constitute the largest single minority and within a generation they will be the largest ethnic group in many churches. From almost every conceivable perspective, the future of the church in the United States is Latino. Many of these Latinos are immigrants themselves or are closely connected to those who have recently immigrated. In other words, the immigration context profoundly shapes the contours of mission in the United States. Yet many congregations find themselves ill prepared, if not ill equipped, to respond to the wide range of needs of the Latino population, including the need to understand more of the intricacies of their particular spirituality.

Mexico has deep cultural roots in Catholicism which leads many to connect with the church when they come north to a new land. Yet not infrequently these newcomers experience messages of non-belonging and non-acceptance, leaving them feeling like strangers not only in a new land but also in their own church.¹⁹ Even among those who come to churches where immigrants are well received, questions remain about whether traditional approaches are the most adequate means to carry out the mission of the church. My own experience as a Catholic priest working with Mexican immigrants in Hispanic ministry in the church in the United States has made me more and more aware

¹⁹ As sociologist Anthony Stevens-Arroyo has aptly deemed it, Latino Catholicism is a “shrink-while-we’re-growing” phenomenon: even as the percentage of Latinos who are Catholic decreases, in raw numbers and in percentage of the total Catholic population they continue to increase. Since 1990 the percentage of Latinos who are Catholic decreased to roughly 65 to 70 percent, the percentage of those who claim “no religion” increased to somewhere between 8 to 13 percent and the percentage of Protestants remained roughly the same at about 20 to 23 percent, with a small percentage of Latino adherents to other religions. Yet all categories have increased in actual numbers due to Latino population growth fueled by ongoing immigration and especially relatively high birth rates. Stevens-Arroyo, Anthony M. (2003) *Correction, S¿ Defection, N¿ Hispanics and U.S. Catholicism. America*, 189, 7 July 2003, p. 17.

of the need for a transformative spirituality. When I first started working with Latinos at the parish level, I knew that many were coming to church, receiving the Sacraments and listening to the Word of God, but I had to ask, in all honesty, if the way we tried to implement this mission really engaged their hopes and potential for a deeper spiritual transformation and enabled the power of the gospel to have its intended effect.

During this time I came across one approach to transformative spirituality in an organization called the Valley Missionary Program. It is a Catholic, lay-clerical organization that addresses the personal struggles and spiritual hungers of undocumented Mexican immigrants. It began in Coachella, a town in the agricultural valley of California and it has spread throughout Mexico and other parts of the world, largely because the immigrants have discovered through it a renewed sense of Christian spirituality which stimulates their own transformation and becomes a source of empowerment for mission. In various ways the Valley Missionary Program has become an effective means of spiritual transformation within the Latino community.²⁰

The programme derives its momentum from a four-day Missionary Encounter retreat which forms the basis of a foundational religious experience that helps create Christian community and foster missionary activity.²¹ Through an elaborate system of rituals, festive music, creative meals, a celebratory atmosphere, prepared talks, sacramental services, Scripture readings, enacted mini-dramas, popular religious devotions, video presentations and personal sharing, the participants begin to open their lives to the concrete offer of love which provides an opportunity for sharing their lives more fully with others and finding a path towards healing and empowerment. The dynamism of the programme has its origin in a common religious experience that generates new relationships grounded in friendship with God and fellowship in mission.

The effectiveness of the programme stems in part from its capacity to foster life-giving connections by creating a space of hospitality in the context of the marginalization of the immigrant, a place for connections amidst their alienation and finally a sense of mission from their experiences of meaninglessness. The first area that fosters a transformative spirituality involves the creation of a sense of hospitality for migrants in the context of their marginalization. When Mexican immigrants come to the United States, they often experience cultural displacement, causing them to isolate and insulate themselves from

²⁰ For more on the subject of the Valley Missionary Program and the spirituality of undocumented immigrants, see Groody, Daniel G. (2002) *Border of Death, Valley of Life: An Immigrant Journey of Heart and Spirit*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.

²¹ These weekends are the offspring of *Cursillo* retreats, but they have been changed and modified so as to correlate more specifically with the particular migrant experience.

the outside world. The inability to speak or understand English intensifies their feeling of distance from home and isolation in a new place. Moreover, they often find it difficult to express the deeper experiences of the heart: fears of being rejected, useless, unimportant, used, abused, mistreated, disregarded and oppressed. Many immigrants consequently build up high psychological walls between themselves and the outside world: they become strangers not only in a foreign land but even in the terrain of their own hearts. Living in the United States leaves many Mexican immigrants with the feeling of absolute non-belonging.²²

The Missionary Encounter retreat invites the migrants into a different world, one that encourages them to believe that God loves them, which is mediated through their experience of a team that welcomes, embraces and serves them. It creates a context where those who have experienced rejection, marginalization and discrimination can discover what it means to be accepted and valued for who they are as human beings. In contrast to the world which regards them as strangers, inferior and even as slaves, the retreat team welcomes them as honoured guests, treats them as dignified friends and serves them lavishly and without condition. Such an experience opens up the possibility for a new reference point in their lives which is grounded on God's love for them and tangibly experienced in community, an experience which is at variance with the socially constructed stereotype which frequently diminishes if not dehumanizes them.

Hospitality manifests itself in part through the creation of sacred and social space that is rooted in an appreciation of the migrant's cultural heritage. Various meals, attire, songs and even the architecture of the buildings emerge from their own homeland their own history and their collective story. Even while they feel multiple levels of discrimination in mainstream American culture because of the colour of their skin, the language they speak and the customs they cherish, this environment is more than cosmetic because it gives them a way of feeling at home in a foreign land; it helps them understand in concrete ways God's acceptance of them at the depths of their human experience. They discover that believing is not simply about assenting to God in abstractions; rather the proclamation and reception of the gospel is first mediated through a world that is familiar to them, even as it calls them beyond it to a place of more universal connection with others. The rooting of the gospel in their world makes possible the envisioning of a new world.

²² For more on this subject, see Santos, John Phillip (1999) *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*, Viking, New York; Rodriguez, Richard (1982) *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez: An Autobiography*, D.R. Godine, Boston, MA; and Elizondo, Virgilio P. (1988) *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet*, Meyer-Stone Books, Oak Park, IL.

The second area of transformative spirituality has to do with the ways in which the retreat helps this community of immigrants establish connections with each other in the context of their experience of alienation. In many ways these undocumented immigrants feel alienated on every level of their being. They are often separated from their spouses, children and, due to the trauma they undergo as immigrants, even from themselves.

The spirituality of the programme is profoundly “communal” and it reveals that at the very core of the human heart is the desire to be connected to others. The retreat not only stresses “personal conversion” but especially “communal conversion”, of belonging to a small Christian community where they can address their daily questions together and realize that they are no longer alone. The purpose of the retreat is to form Christian communities. These communities are formed first on the retreat, but some have been gathering weekly for thirty years or longer. They gather to reflect on their lives in light of the scriptures and share a common meal together. Practised on a regular basis, the ritual of gathering together is one of the central ways in which their relationships grow together and are nurtured and sustained.

Lastly, the dynamism of Valley Missionary Program brings out the hunger of the human heart for mission, which becomes all the more apparent against the backdrop of the migrant experience of meaninglessness. The crippling poverty at home robs many migrants of their human dignity and many find themselves looking down the barrel of an economic gun. Working at difficult, dirty and dangerous – the so called 3D – jobs, they not only feel alone, but sometimes they feel they are no one to anyone. Often they wonder if there is anything more to life than the basic struggle to survive. In contrast to much of western society, their challenge is not about believing in God in an age of modern science and post-modernism but about believing in a personal God in a world that regards them as non-persons.²³ Very often, what is an even greater challenge than believing in God is believing in themselves, especially since the rest of society often regards them as disposable and worthless. The retreat helps many migrants undergo an identity shift which changes their self-understanding from being migrants to being missionaries. This personal renewal becomes mission as they invite others to take part in the programme for themselves, to discover anew a relationship with the living God, to form bonds of Christian friendship that unite them on a deep level and to engage in various works of mercy in their communities.

²³ Boff, Leonardo and Boff, Clodovis (1987) *Introducing Liberation Theology*, p.7. Orbis, Maryknoll, N.Y.

An important dimension of the missionary focus of the programme is its outreach to those who are disconnected from the church. Its mission is not to those living in the mainstream but to those, likewise, who are marginalized. As others have reached out to them and called them into communities of meaningful connections, they see that a central part of their mission is inviting others into fellowship with those who find themselves estranged at various levels. More than a traditional church renewal organization, which is largely aimed at those who are existing members of the church, the programme is something that creates new relationships by inviting all people to become part of a community and discover the healing and reconciliation that comes from friendship with the divine, connection to others and orientation to mission. Through word and deed, they begin to discover that Jesus Christ is among them, cares about them and calls them to collaborate with him in the building up of a civilization of love.²⁴

The experience of immigrants in the Valley Missionary Program offers one approach to a transformative spirituality and there are many others. I mention this particular case of an inculturated, transformative spirituality in order to begin to name some of the themes which are more universal in scope. These deal with how human life takes shape in the experience of our relationships with God, others, ourselves and creation and it probes who we are, what we value, how we interact, why we are here on earth and ultimately where we are going as individuals and as a human community. As the immigrants of Coachella have found, a transformative spirituality helps people discover some enduring truths about human life: the transforming power of gratuitous love, the joy of forgiveness, the liberating power of divine acceptance, the undeniable need for connection, the power of friendship, the search for meaning, the satisfaction of giving to others, the finding of God in unsuspected places and ultimately the risk and reward of unreserved surrender to a God of life. Discovering they are loved and accepted enables many migrants to risk themselves, to migrate not only physically but also emotionally and relationally, into the new territory of faith in God and service to others. These dimensions emerge not simply from new techniques or new programmes alone but by creating a Christian community that opens up a space that allows people to enter more deeply into the paschal mystery and through the power of the Spirit, to become more and more authentically human.

²⁴ Paul VI was the first pope to use the expression "a civilization of love": "It is the civilization of love and of peace which Pentecost has inaugurated – and we are all aware how much today the world still needs love and peace!" Paul VI, Regina Coeli Address, May 17, 1970. http://www.civilizationoflove.net/19700517_Summary.htm [accessed October 19, 2008]. John Paul II also speaks of a civilization or communion of love in several of his encyclicals: *Novo millennio ineunte* no. 42; *Redemptor hominis* no. 10; *Ecclesia in Europa* nos. 82–85, as well as "a culture of life": *Evangelium vitae* nos. 21, 28, 50, 77, 82, 86, 87, 92, 95, 98, 100.

Spirituality and Transformation: Migration as a Metaphor for Mission

The focus of this article has been to examine a transformative, Christian spirituality that gives expression to the reign of God through the promotion and creation of a more just and human society. From a Christian perspective all transformation in the end must be evaluated and understood illuminated by the light of Jesus, who reveals not only the truth of God but also what it means to be an authentic human being. This spirituality is first and foremost grounded on life in Christ and the process of becoming an embodiment of God's self-giving love for the world. I offer three concluding focal points about spirituality, transformation and justice, namely, that it is 1) cardio-centric, 2) contextually-grounded and 3) commission-oriented.

A spirituality becomes transformative when it engages the deeper levels of the human person and names and claims the deeper truths of the human heart. Unless our efforts are somehow correlated with the significant questions, aspirations and struggles of human beings in the depths of their existence, our missionary efforts will inevitably falter. In this sense we can speak of a transformative spirituality as cardio-centric. As a church community we may have the best medicine in the world, but if it does not address the deeper sicknesses within people, as well as their deeper aspirations, then it is of little use. The mission of the church involves a dynamic interchange between the personal terrain of the human heart, the global terrain of human experience in the heart of the world and the universal terrain of the gratuitous love of God in the heart of Christ.

Secondly, a transformative spirituality is contextually-grounded. It is rooted within the cultural system of people that is part and parcel of human identity. These same cultures may indeed have dimensions which also need change and transformation, but unless evangelization efforts are rooted within these cultural systems, people will find it very difficult to accept divine love within their concrete experience in the world. A transformative spirituality emerges from the crossroads of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of our relationships as well as the multifaceted particular and universal expressions of divine gifts.

Lastly, a transformative spirituality is commission-oriented. As Stephen Bevans notes, "God's call to participate in the divine mission . . . is what constitutes the church. [T]he church does not so much have a mission as the mission has a church."²⁵ The church

²⁵ Bevans, Stephen B. (2008) *Mission among Migrants, Mission of Migrants, Mission of the church*. In: Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese (eds) *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, p.92. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN.

looks not only upward towards the triune God and inward to its own transformation but also outward towards the poor. The fact that Jesus lived and died on the margins and the early church took shape there too, means that the church is transformed on the margins as well. These same margins give life to the church because they enable it to create new relationships.²⁶ The church's own transformation will be deepened as it moves from its own comfort zones to places of greater possibility, even while it encounters and embraces greater vulnerability.

This movement into the margins makes the spiritual life not just a journey but a migration because it orients its movement towards a promised land, it names the concomitant risks and challenges it faces in its difficult sojourn and it highlights the centrality of hospitality offered to all people in its praxis of faith, beginning with those who are most vulnerable. The image of the church as migrant also carries with it a social responsibility. In the migrant the church sees not only an image of itself but also discovers its mission of mercy (Matt. 25:31–46) through which it becomes a sacrament for the world.

In becoming a migrant, the church comes to realize that its mission will take shape on the borders of the world, particularly those between centre and periphery, between privilege and poverty and between life and death. Borders will always be a privileged place of revelation and transformation. By journeying to the margins and placing itself in solidarity with those who are crucified in history, the church will not only be a gift to others but also become something new through the reception of the gift of others.²⁷ As the church lives with those who are vulnerable and is touched by these relationships, it will become more and more stripped of many false illusions and discover that relationships shape the very core of its own existence and are the means through which it is made into something new. Put another way, a transformative spirituality is about finding the way home. But home is not simply a geographical location. Rather, home is a state of being that leads one to live at peace through the ongoing work towards right relationships with God, oneself, one's neighbour and the world. A spirituality of transformation, after all, is a movement towards integration and a movement towards our most authentic selves as we seek to make present God's reign of justice.

²⁶ Gonzalez, Justo L. (2002) *The Changing Shape of Church History*, p. 14. Chalice Press, St. Louis, MO.

²⁷ For more on the topic of the crucified peoples in the mission of the church, see Groody, Daniel G. (2009) Jesus and the Undocumented: A Spiritual Geography of a Crucified Peoples. *Theological Studies*, 70, June 2009, pp. 298–316.